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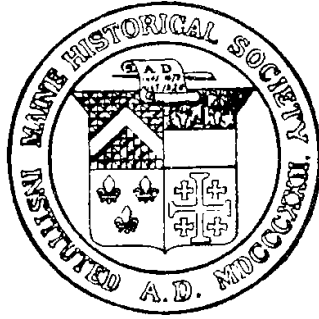
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*Sebastien Racle and Norridgewock, 1724:  
The Eckstorm Conspiracy Thesis  
Reconsidered*

by

Kenneth M. Morrison

In 1934, Fannie Hardy Eckstorm of Brewer, Maine, a life-long friend and student of the Abnaki Indians, published an article examining the controversial issues surrounding the life and death of the Jesuit Sebastien Racle who served the Norridgewock Abnaki from 1694 until his death in August, 1724.<sup>1</sup> While Eckstorm accepted the major features of the English view of Racle, she added elements to this interpretation which seem to make her case unassailable. The English, with a few notable exceptions, have argued that Racle was a French political agent who coerced the Abnaki into taking up arms against innocent English settlers. According to this view Racle was motivated by his hatred of the Puritan heretics and wished only for the concrete establishment of French political and religious hegemony in North America. Many of the surviving documents—angry letters from Racle to the English governors and dispatches from the French governor to Racle—superficially support this interpretation. Eckstorm added two considerations to this argument which seem to prove conclusively her case against Racle and which absolve the English of respon-

sibility for the disastrous Indian war of 1722-1727. Eckstorm discovered that a significant minority of the Norridgewocks bitterly opposed Racle. She further contends that Racle's letters, published posthumously in the *Lettres Edifiantes* and now readily available in the *Jesuit Relations*, were fabrications drafted by French authorities to hide their embarrassment at the loss of Norridgewock and to minimize awareness at the French court of Massachusetts' threat to New France's southern borders. A critical evaluation of Eckstorm's argument shows that while she added important facets to the Racle story, her interpretation is, in the main, untenable and not in accord with available documentary evidence.<sup>2</sup>

Despite an imposing array of primary sources, Eckstorm's article is not solidly based on the actual issues which divided the Abnaki and the English between 1688 and 1727. When King William's War erupted in 1689, the English hastily, and mistakenly, ascribed the strong Abnaki offensive to the interference and machinations of the French among them. Massachusetts could not then, and in fact never did, examine her own impact on the Abnaki. The French provided a too convenient Machiavellian symbol to explain the intransigence of Abnaki behavior, and Massachusetts' interest in Indian affairs never rose above the level of pragmatic politics. In time, Sebastien Racle's imposing presence on the Kennebec River led the English to conclude that he, and not their short-sighted and arrogant treatment of the Indians, was the cause of all their difficulties. Amazingly, this simplistic argument has endured for two hundred and fifty years, reaching its culmination in Eckstorm's closely argued article.

Sebastien Racle's residence among the Abnaki before the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 has attracted little attention and engendered no controversy. Yet it was during these years that the conflict between New England and New

France raged most intensely. Racle's political role should be most clearly evident during this period if the Eckstorm argument carries any weight. Racle laid the basis of his missionary endeavours in these years and learned about Massachusetts' threat both to his mission and to Abnaki tribal integrity. Most importantly, Racle learned that the administration of New France understood little about Abnaki tribal issues.

When Racle arrived on the Kennebec in 1694, the war between France and England had created a politically charged situation beyond his control. Though the Abnaki were clearly alienated by the English, their position between New England and New France made their involvement in the Imperial wars inevitable. Racle was sent to the Kennebec to assist Father Vincent Bigot. By the end of the decade he was recalled because he disagreed with Bigot who favored Abnaki-English conferences.<sup>3</sup> Racle's absence was short-lived. In 1701 the two Bigot brothers were summarily recalled when Brouillan, the Governor of Acadia, accused them of acting against French interests among the Abnaki.<sup>4</sup> Racle returned to the Kennebec but his reassignment does not indicate any anti-English hostility on his part. Racle's later actions suggest that he avoided any slavish response to French political designs and that he carefully weighted alternatives before committing himself to any policy *vis a vis* Massachusetts.

In addressing Eckstorm's view of Racle, it is necessary to consider the seeming contradictions in the sources about Racle's political activities during Queen Anne's War. In 1702, just before the war, Massachusetts attempted to win the Abnakis' neutrality. According to Racle, Governor Dudley pleaded with him not to "influence your Indians to make war upon us." Racle suavely replied: "My Religion and my office as Priest were a security that I would give them only exhortations to

peace.”<sup>5</sup> Racle seemingly accepted Abnaki neutrality. Soon after the Abnaki became actively engaged in the war and Racle hurriedly assured Governor Vaudreuil that “the Abnakis would take up the hatchet whenever he pleased.”<sup>6</sup> The contradiction between Racle’s reply to Dudley and his words to Vaudreuil is more apparent than real. Racle did not lie to Dudley. His mission was endangered by the French ministry and Governor Vaudreuil who hoped to manipulate the Abnaki for their own benefit. The Jesuit disagreed with this policy and, in the process, was nearly recalled in disgrace by the irate French authorities.

Racle did not accept the inevitability of the war as quickly as his words suggest. In 1702 Governor Brouillan, referring to the Indians’ meeting with Dudley, reported to the Minister of Marine that the Abnaki had concluded a treaty of neutrality with the English, and he accused Racle of being responsible for the Indians’ capitulation.<sup>7</sup> Pontchartrain, the Minister of Marine, reacted vigorously: “I was very much surprised,” he wrote to the Jesuit Superior, “to learn that one of your fathers was mixed up in such a business, and I believe that you will judge it proper to withdraw him from there . . . .” Pontchartrain preferred, he said, “some one who knows better how to manage the interests of religion and those of the King, which are inseparable.”<sup>8</sup>

The Minister soon decided that Abnaki neutrality would not harm French interests, yet he still declared that “His Majesty considered it wrong [mauvais] that their missionaries interferred on the side of this neutrality; and I have written in his name to Father De la Chaize to have Father Ralle [sic] recalled [retired] and to send another priest in his place.”<sup>9</sup>

Sebastien Racle was not removed. Before the Minister’s orders reached Canada, the political situation changed completely. After a conference between the

English and the Abnaki in June, 1703, some Englishmen wantonly sacked the home of St. Castin on the Penobscot, which the Indians considered an attack on themselves. Governor Vaudreuil quickly took advantage of the misconceived English attack for he believed that "the English and the Abenakis must be kept irreconcilable enemies."<sup>10</sup> Vaudreuil sent French officers to the Abnaki and together they raided Casco and Wells in August, 1703.

Sebastien Racle was not responsible for the outbreak of hostilities. He did not agree with Vaudreuil. Only after the attack on Casco did Racle absolve himself of any pro-English stigma, assuring Vaudreuil that the "Abnakis would take up the hatchet whenever he pleased." Racle realized the drastic consequences the war would have and he worked assiduously to minimize the effect of Vaudreuil's war policy on the Abnaki. The other missionaries, Fathers Gaulin and Aubry, "met at Norridgewock and told the Indians that they must look for some other country, for that it was impossible for them to live there."<sup>11</sup> With Racle's support the two priests advised Vaudreuil to move the Abnaki to Canada. Without English arms and ammunition, starvation would devastate the tribe as English guns could not. Racle ministered to the Norridgewocks at the new Canadian mission called St. Xavier for the duration of the war.<sup>12</sup>

The Abnakis' retreat to Canada dramatically underlines the peculiar problems of the Jesuit missions in Maine. The location of the Abnaki villages, especially Norridgewock, required the Indians to seek material assistance from the English rather than the French. In wartime the Abnaki depended solely on the French and the Jesuits' problems were simplified. In time of conflict, the French governor directed the Abnaki through his officers. In peacetime, the Jesuits coped with the complications of English-Abnaki relations alone. The Jesuits, and

particularly Sebastien Racle, became the single factor providing stability in the policy formation of the turbulent post-war years. They directed Vaudreuil's fumbling efforts to comprehend the importance of the Abnakis' independence for the welfare of New France. Tempered in war, Sebastien Racle's mettle would be tested by peace.

The Treaty of Utrecht, ending Queen Anne's War, was a serious blow to French interests among the Abnaki. By leaving the issue of Abnaki intelligence unsettled, the treaty contributed to the eventual conflict which engulfed that tribe and Sebastien Racle. The French lost all of Acadia to Great Britain—though its boundaries were never settled<sup>13</sup>—and Massachusetts responded to her Indian problem with confident fervor. Governor Dudley declared that the Abnaki would not be pacified “untill some English settlements be established . . . to govern them, and their priests be kept from them . . . ”<sup>14</sup> This dual policy caused the explosive confrontation between the Abnaki and the English. These are the very issues which Eckstorm ignores.

Eckstorm completely misconstrues French policy toward the Abnaki after Utrecht. Vaudreuil did not intend, as she asserts, “to stir up Indian war with the English in time of peace”<sup>15</sup> Racle actually welcomed peace and opened negotiations with Colonel Moody to halt the bloodshed.<sup>16</sup> The French authorities knew that the terms of Utrecht threatened New France but their initial response was to transfer the Abnaki to their new stronghold on Cape Breton. Vaudreuil obviously did not understand the Abnaki and Father LaChasse, then missionary to the Penobscots, told him that he “must be ignorant of the extreme attachment that these Indians bear their country . . . .”<sup>17</sup> The Jesuits did not hesitate to disagree with either Vaudreuil or the Minister of Marine when the Abnakis' interests were at stake. Similarly, the priests in-

sisted on maintaining the Abnaki in Maine not to spite the English but, as time went on, in spite of the increasingly abrasive behavior and demands of Massachusetts.

Fannie Hardy Eckstorm thought that “the more desperately the priests worked for France, the more firmly did their own Indians oppose them.”<sup>18</sup> While she correctly emphasizes the growing internal conflict among the Norridgewocks, her conclusions about its causes and French responsibility must be considerably altered. A misdated document led her to believe that the Norridgewocks were seriously opposed to Racle as early as 1718,<sup>19</sup> and the identification of the pro-English Indians is more complex than she supposed. Eckstorm does not make the distinction between Norridgewock and the other Abnaki villages and she does not identify Indians hostile to Racle at Norridgewock. The evidence indicates that the Penobscot and St. John Indians were most seriously pro-English,<sup>20</sup> and though there were certainly pro-English Indians at Norridgewock, their strength in 1717-1718 was unimportant.

The English documents, on which Eckstorm heavily relies, ignore the distinction between the words of individual, anglophone Indians and the expressed intention of the entire tribe. On one occasion Captain Westbrook showed the Indians a letter from Racle to Governor Shute. The Indians listened attentively and then declared that “the Jesuit Lied, and he was very wicked.”<sup>21</sup> Eckstorm accepted uncritically this incident and asserted that the Norridgewocks “had come to distrust their priests and said openly that they lied.”<sup>22</sup> There is no indication, however, that these Indians were from Norridgewock. Eckstorm clearly violates her evidence in any case by crediting the words of a few unidentified Indians over the unmistakable opposition expressed by the Norridgewocks at every conference with Massachusetts. The



establishment of Racle's unpopularity among the Norridgewocks is more difficult than Eckstorm would have us believe.

Much of the conflict among the Norridgewocks, and the opposition to Racle, was produced by individual sachem's efforts to curry favor with the English in evident disregard to their larger tribal responsibilities. The English, and Eckstorm, blithely ignored this aspect of the confrontation. Massachusetts carefully cultivated the good will of the sachems whenever possible. Some sachems, like Bomazeen who was "very inclinable" to the English, received special treatment which provoked tribal squabbles and jealousy.<sup>23</sup> Norridgewock divisiveness during this period is not solely attributable to Sebastien Racle.

The issue which divided the Abnaki came to the fore at the Arrowsic conference in August, 1717, and had nothing to do with French political ambitions against New England. Governor Shute insisted on English claims to Abnaki lands with such intransigence that some of the Norridgewocks feared the possibility of war.<sup>24</sup> Faced with Massachusetts' refusal to compromise on the legality of her land deeds, the Norridgewock sachems skirted the main issue. "Without talking at this time about lines and limits, we declare ourselves willing," the Abnaki said, "that the English should settle and occupy, where their fathers did, though we very much dislike their forts."<sup>25</sup> The Norridgewocks did not repudiate their claim of unalienated title to the lower Kennebec or their contention that the English might not expand further than where they had settled in the seventeenth century. The Norridgewocks merely deferred comment until a later time.

English expansion alone divided the Abnaki at the Arrowsic conference. Sebastien Racle and the English viewed the land issue differently and Racle led the Ab-

naki to believe that they could rely upon French aid to maintain their title to the Kennebec. Racle angrily threatened Governor Shute with the inevitability of French aid.<sup>26</sup> Grants from the French King for the Indians' support, in addition to the construction of a chapel at Norridgewock with French funds, reinforced this impression on the Indians. Racle encouraged Abnaki antipathy to the English settlements but he behaved openly; he would not have advised the English of his intentions had he been a French agent. Racle did not invent Norridgewock irritation with Massachusetts. Even the Penobscots and the St. John Indians rebuffed English agents when they suggested that they acknowledge the British king.<sup>27</sup> Those Indians also made it clear that English settlements would not be tolerated.

Racle was not primarily concerned with French strategic interests in Acadia. He did not incite the Abnaki against the English. Rather, he encouraged them to kill English cattle in an effort to halt the settlements. When Governor Shute assured the Council of Trade as early as 1718 that he could "prevent a war breaking out,"<sup>28</sup> Sebastien Racle was pressing only for a boundary settlement. Racle warned Governor Vaudreuil that Abnaki-English antagonisms could be solved only by the prompt settlement of the boundary between New England and New France. He urged Vaudreuil to convince the Minister of Marine of the issue's importance.<sup>29</sup> The Council of Marine, rather than Racle, immediately saw the situation in the pragmatic terms of imperial policy and contended that "the English pretensions are exorbitant."<sup>30</sup> Support for the Norridgewocks was not forthcoming, however. Vaudreuil was cautioned to do nothing to jeopardize France's alliance with Great Britain.<sup>31</sup>

Without any consensus among the French authorities about the confrontation, the Abnaki and Sebastien Racle were severely tested between 1719 and 1721. During this

period, and not earlier as Eckstorm supposes, the Norridgewocks' initial anti-English resolve partially collapsed. Racle remained highly irritated by the Rev. Joseph Baxter's feeble efforts to Calvinize his Catholic converts. The pressure of settlement did not subside and the clandestine liquor traffic flourished unabated. "There is no Justice among'st the English," Racle asserted.<sup>32</sup>

The English refused to consider the impact of their policy because Sebastien Racle conveniently explained for them the Abnakis' refusal to acquiesce to their terms. When the Norridgewocks demurred again to admit the validity of English land deeds to the Kennebec in 1720, the English commissioners quickly ascribed their testiness to the "Cunning Insinuations of that Incendiary the Priest."<sup>33</sup> Eckstorm overlooks this aspect of the story. She might well have asked why the English found Racle's advice to his Indians "Cunning Insinuations," but their inquiry points away from her conspiracy thesis.

When the English offered—through the ever-faithful Bomazeen—to send some Abnaki to Great Britain, Racle exploded. He curtly declared that if any of the Norridgewocks accepted he would "drive them forever from the Church." This "railing letter,"<sup>34</sup> as the English put it, minced no words. "Any treaty," Racle insisted, "particularly that of Arrowsic is Null, if I don't approve it, though the Indians have consented, for I bring them so many reasons against it that they absolutely condemn what they have done." Racle was especially angered by Englishmen covertly seeking information about him from his Indians. "They inquire about my words: do they intend to unite against me to drive me from my mission," he demanded. Racle added that "Whatever you think you can't move me." The Jesuit closed with a frank declaration of intent by warning the English to recall their settlers, "for assuredly," he promised, "there shall not one remain there."<sup>35</sup>

The Norridgewocks continued only to kill English cattle despite these threats. Massachusetts made plans for an Indian conference to demand satisfaction for damages as well as hostages guaranteeing the future peaceful conduct of the Indians. Significantly a minority of the Executive Council held that it was not “just for this Governmt. to encourage private persons to settle”<sup>36</sup> on the Kennebec. The House of Representatives nevertheless resolved to send 250 men to Norridgewock to arrest Sebastien Racle.<sup>37</sup>

The conference opened first on November 25, 1720, with the Indians requesting that “the English people may be removed from Merry Meeting” Bay. As usual the commissioners refused to consider the Indians’ point of view and they insisted: “What security will you give us for your good conduct . . . for we will take your words no longer,” Overwhelmed, the Indians enquired: “How many skins are we to pay . . .?” Arguing to the last, these essentially pro-English Indians agreed to deliver 200 skins and to surrender four sachems within twenty-five days. When the English wished, at the end of the conference, to discuss the settlements, the Indians merely replied: “We have said all yt we were ordered to say.”<sup>38</sup> Much to Racle’s disgust, the hostages were presented to the Executive Council on January 13, 1721.<sup>39</sup>

Equally divisive for the Norridgewocks was Governor Vaudreuil’s refusal to aid them with French soldiers as Racle had promised. The King and Minister wished to halt English expansion on the Kennebec but they refused Vaudreuil permission to actively help them. When Vaudreuil temporized, the Norridgewock sachems at Quebec

retorted with an ironical laugh—Know, that we all who inhabit this vast continent will, whensoever we please, as long as we exist, unite to expel all foreigners from it, be they who they may.<sup>40</sup>

The Norridgewocks were hopelessly divided by both

the French and the English in 1720-1721 and Sebastien Racle moved to strengthen their resolution. Racle's life was in danger from his own Indians, as Eckstorm notes,<sup>41</sup> but their hatred came from Vaudreuil's failure to give them the support Racle had promised and not because the Jesuit worked desperately for French interests.

Racle began to undermine the pro-English Norridgewocks because he knew that the English had ordered them to abandon him.<sup>42</sup> When Massachusetts set a date to hear the Abnaki response on his dismissal, Racle decided to pack the conference. He invited the Canadian Abnaki of St. Francis and Becancourt to join the Norridgewocks and, at his suggestion, Vaudreuil hurried to insure their compliance.<sup>43</sup> "I think you will find," Intendant Begon assured Racle, that the governor's speech to those Indians was in "the Sense proposed by you."<sup>44</sup> Though Vaudreuil and Begon realized that only Racle's gamble could recoup the loss of French prestige at Norridgewock, the priest's determination frightened them. Intendant Begon warned Racle three times about the "prudence with which we Deem ourselves obliged To Act toward the English, so that we may not Commit ourselves."<sup>45</sup> Vaudreuil and Begon feared that Racle would not keep French interests in mind while confronting Massachusetts and they sent the Jesuit Superior, Father LaChasse, to the Kennebec to observe the proceedings. On July 28, 1721, the two Jesuits and Castine the younger, marched into Brunswick at the head of 200 Indians and openly defied the English. The confrontation panicked Massachusetts. The Indians refused to compromise further, demanded that the English abandon their settlements, and that the hostages be returned.<sup>46</sup> Massachusetts could not compromise with these demands and within a year war was a reality between the Abnaki and the Bay Colony.<sup>47</sup>

Eckstorm does not treat the escalation of this conflict and, more seriously, her interpretation of the English attack on Norridgewock overlooks inconsistencies in the English sources and exaggerates the French response to the attack. The French authorities had nothing to hide from the Ministry of Marine; Eckstorm only supposes that they were embarrassed by the loss of Norridgewock.

Historians have divided into two camps on the issue of the English attack on Norridgewock on August 23, 1724. The English follow the sworn reports of the attackers—actually the testimony of Captain Harmon. Most writers supplement Harmon's two accounts with Thomas Hutchinson's *History of Massachusetts-Bay* which critically examines Captain Mouton's version of the attack as well. The French view rests with three men, Governor Vaudreuil, and Fathers LaChasse and Charlevoix, who in turn follow the surviving Norridgewocks. Eckstorm modifies these two, older views.

Eckstorm reports that Racle was forewarned that the English were on their way to Norridgewock. While she attributes the warning to the prophetic mutterings of an Indian shaman, or medicine man, Racle's last letter written on the afternoon of his death suggests otherwise.<sup>48</sup> Returning from their latest expedition, some Indians reported that 200 men were coming to "drive them out of their camp . . ." Racle thought that the possibility was remote:

But I said to them, how could that be, seeing we are daily surrounding and making inroads upon them . . . Besides, in all the war you have had with them, did you ever see them come to attack you in the spring, summer, or in the fall, when they knew you were in the woods.<sup>49</sup>

Racle's statement was correct; the English always avoided campaigns in the summer when the troops were susceptible to disease.<sup>50</sup>

Eckstorm's claim that Racle "need not have lost the

mission if he had taken a warning given him in ample time,"<sup>51</sup> is a serious error. Sebastien Racle neither ridiculed the Indians' fear of an invasion nor convinced them to stay at Norridgewock. The old priest told Father LaChasse that the Indians

Hearken to all my reasons aforegoing, but follow their own. They design to quit the village for a fortnight, and to go five or six leagues up the river, they proposed it to me, and *I have given my consent*.<sup>52</sup>

The Indians retreat from their village was only hours too late.

When their neared Norridgewock around noon of August 23, the English decided to divide their forces. Captain Harmon, the commander-in-chief for the expedition, oddly preferred to scout the corn fields, leaving the task, responsibility, but not the credit to Captain Moulton.<sup>53</sup> The commander by default proceeded directly to the village. At this point the ensuing attack becomes obscure. Moulton's account, as given by Hutchinson, contradicts one of Harmon's two accounts in the Boston newspapers. At question in this conflict of English sources is the problem of the stockade, despite the fact that Eckstorm confidently asserted its existence.

Both Governor Vaudreuil and Father LaChasse reported that the village was not enclosed,<sup>54</sup> though there is still extant a map drawn by Joseph Heath in 1719 describing Norridgewock as a fort "Built with Round Loggs nine foot long one end set into the Ground . . ." <sup>55</sup> Interestingly, Harmon's accounts in the Boston papers and Hutchinson are silent about the stockade. Eckstorm states that the *New England Courant* mentions the east gate. The newspaper actually said, less substantially, that the plan of the offense was to place the troops so that the Indians "could in no way avoid them by running into the River."<sup>56</sup> Certainly a stockade was not essential to, and probably would hamper, that strategy.

Even the other English version does not solve the problem. According to Harmon's second story, action ensued after their "approach within Pistol Shot" of the town.<sup>57</sup> But Hutchinson says that the village

about 3 o'clock suddenly opened upon them. There was not an Indian to be seen, being all in their wigwams. Our men were ordered to advance softly and to keep a profound silence. At length, an Indian came out of one of the wigwams and, as he was making water, looked round him and discovered the English close upon him. He immediately gave the war whoop and ran in for his gun. The whole village took the alarm, and the warriors ran to meet the English, the rest fled to save their lives.<sup>58</sup>

Though the two accounts differ, neither makes provision for the stockade. It seems that the Indians would have had time to close the gates. It cannot be proven that the gate was left open so that Racle could flee to safety. Eckstorm only supposed that his house was outside the enclosure as it was at Penobscot; there is no evidence of that and Heath's map does not mention it. Even if we accept Moulton's account we cannot establish the stockade's existence. Eckstorm emphasizes the issue because she believed that Vaudreuil and LaChasse had much to hide in the loss of the most important Abnaki village. But they had not evaded the loss of Penobscot though it was as important as Norridgewock.<sup>59</sup> Nor did they hide the fact that many Abnaki fled to Canada at the beginning of the war. In any case, the French Ministry could not hold Vaudreuil responsible for a defeat in which their denial of aid played so vital a part.

The French accounts of the attack are clearly no fabrications. Father LaChasse reported what he heard from the Indians though he did so with pious embellishment. There was real need of inspiring support in France for the sorely beleaguered Abnaki nation; in 1726 there was little interest in the Jesuit missions of Canada. Jesuits were not in vogue at court and the Superior-General's pleas for the Abnaki had fallen on deaf ears since 1713.



Racle's death gave LaChasse an issue to fire French popular imagination. He did not invent a myth about Racle's death. He had known, admired and loved Racle since his arrival in New France and the two priests had been comrades in diplomatic endeavours for the Abnaki. LaChasse's eulogy was not intended to be a dispassionate review of the case.<sup>60</sup>

Governor Vaudreuil, in his official dispatch, did not romanticize the attack as did LaChasse. The governor described the sudden attack without exaggeration.<sup>61</sup> The Indians who survived the first volley tried to hold the English while the women and children raced for the river. Without dramatic effect, Vaudreuil described Racle rushing from his house only to be immediately cut down by an English volley.<sup>62</sup> It is this account from the surviving Norridgewocks that has inspired the popular "martyr" myth of Racle's death. Eckstorm reacted not only to inconsistencies in the French sources but also to their uncritical acceptance.<sup>63</sup>

Vaudreuil's account is not surprising. When the Indians returned on the following day, they found Racle's body with the dead chieftains heaped in the center of the village, and hence, the story of the priest's heroic death.<sup>64</sup> The Indians did not witness Racle's armed defense and they did not see Lieutenant Jaques shoot him. Eckstorm thought it improbable that there were any remains left to be mourned because the village was burned by the retreating forces.<sup>65</sup> The English slept in the village, however, and with 128 men to bivouac, it is likely that they moved all the bodies from the cabins into the center of the village. The returning Indians understandably concluded that Racle died surrounded by the village sachems.

In retrospect it seems incredible that Racle's death has aroused such intensity of feeling. Admirers and detractors alike agree that he was an extraordinary man.

Shrouds of infamy and sanctity have been thrown upon him though either claim is extreme. It is preposterous to claim that he was motivated by an inveterate hatred of the English. It is equally absurd to lay at his feet the burden of war guilt. The record speaks for itself. Racle encouraged no atrocities. No Englishman was killed before an Abnaki was. No Englishmen were abducted until, in Abnaki eyes, four of their chieftains were. Nor were the settlements harrassed until they had passed an explicitly declared line, and the English were well aware of that line.

Racle was not a French agent. His nationality was secondary to his personal commitment to the Abnaki. He feared, but accepted, Abnaki trade with the English. He remained a realist though he opposed the continual English encroachments on the Kennebec. He accepted the existence of Brunswick, Topsham and Georgetown but barred further expansion. He was no sly political intriguer. He described his point of view to Governor Shute who promptly rejected it, time and again. The causes of the war of 1722-1727 are complex and the "villain theory" along with the "martyr theory" must be discarded as simplistic. The very readiness of the English to attribute Abnaki mischievousness to Racle's influence is, in itself, enough to discredit that view.

The wildly divergent views of Racle do not stem from any deviousness in his actions. Rather the conflict of interpretations has come from a polarization of the secondary sources and a partial consideration of the primary testimony. The English hastened to condemn what they saw as a mad, Jesuitical plot against their frontier ancestors. The French were no more impartial. They supported the martyr myth because Racle opposed the English heretics who envied his success with the Abnaki. In the process, Sebastien Racle emerged not as the determined man he was, but as a shadow of two cultural fictions.

—NOTES—

<sup>1</sup> Fannie H. Eckstorm, "The Attack on Norridgewock, 1724," *New England Quarterly*, VII (Sept., 1934), 541-78.

<sup>2</sup> I will deal with the issue of the letters at some later time. They were certainly not forgeries as Eckstorm believed. They were edited for publication, however, from five original Racle letters which are now at Harvard. These documents establish the correct spelling of Racle's name. For a general critique of Eckstorm's evidence see Elizabeth Ring, "Fannie Hardy Eckstorm: Maine Woods Historian," *New England Quarterly*, XXVI (March, 1953), 45-64, and see also Henri Bechard, "A propose de deux lettres du Pere Sebastien Rasles, S.J.," *Sciences Ecclesiastiques*, II (1949), 191-218, for a detailed rebuttal.

<sup>3</sup> Robert H. Lord, John E. Sexton and Edward T. Harrington, *History of the Archdiocese of Boston* (New York, 1944), I, 56.

<sup>4</sup> Oct. 6, 1701, Memoire Joint a la lettre de Monsieur de Brouillan, Archives des Colonies (AC), C11D, IV, part 1, 146; Oct. 30, 1701, Abrege d'une lettre de Monsieur de Brouillan au Ministre, *Collection de Manuscripts contenant lettres, Memoires, et autres documents historiques relatifs a la Nouvelle France* (Quebec, 1884), III, 80.

<sup>5</sup> Oct. 12, 1723, Rale to Brother, R.G. Thwaites, ed., *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents* (New York, 1959), LXVII, 197-203.

<sup>6</sup> Nov. 15, 1703, Beauharnois et Vaudreuil au Ministre, *Collection de Manuscripts*, II, 405-06; AC, C11A, 21, 13-16; E.B. O'Callaghan, ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of New York* (New York Colonial Documents) (Albany, 1855), IX, 756.

<sup>7</sup> Cited by Lord, *History of the Archdiocese of Boston*, I, 84.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted, *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Quoted, *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Nov. 15, 1703, Abstract of certain parts of a Despatch from Messrs. de Vaudreuil and Beauharnois, O'Callaghan, *New York Colonial Documents*, IX, 755-56.

<sup>11</sup> Thomas Church, *The Old French and Indian Wars, from 1689 to 1704*, in Benjamin Church, *The History of the Great Indian War of 1675 and 1676, Commonly Called Phillip's War*, S.G. Drake, ed. (Hartford, 1851), 283. Lord, Sexton and Hall ignore Racle's statement that he would excite the Abnaki to warfare. *History of the Archdiocese of Boston*, I, 86.

<sup>12</sup> Nov. 17, 1704, Messrs. de Vaudreuil and Beauharnois to M. de Pontchartrain, O'Callaghan, *New York Colonial Documents*, IX, 762.

<sup>13</sup> F.G. Davenport, *European Treaties on the History of the United States and Its Dependancies* (Washington, 1934), III, 197-98. Because the "ancient boundaries" of Acadia were uncertain, it was decided to settle the issue later through an international commission. W.S. MacNutt, *The Atlantic Provinces: The Emergence of Colonial Society, 1712-1857* (Toronto, 1965), 12.

<sup>14</sup> Dec. 2, 1712, Gov. Dudley to Council of Trade and Plantations, *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, 1574-1733*, XXVI, 102-03.

<sup>15</sup> Eckstorm, "Attack," 546.

<sup>16</sup> Nov. 18, 1712, Letter from Sebastian Rale to Capt. Samuel Moody, J.P. Baxter, ed., *Baxter Manuscripts, Documentary History of the State of Maine* (Portland, 1907), IX, 334-35; Mass. Arch., 51:253.

<sup>17</sup> Oct. 19, 1720, Memoire sur les Limites de l'Acadie, envoye de Quebec a Mgr le Duc d'Orleans, Regent, par le Pere Charlevoix, Jesuite, AC, C11E, 2, 80f; misdated under 1718 in O'Callaghan, *New York Colonial Documents*, IX, 879-80.

<sup>18</sup> Eckstorm, "Attack," 547.

<sup>19</sup> See Note 17.

<sup>20</sup> June 30, 1715, Council of Trade and Plantations to Mr. Secretary Stanhope, *Calendar of State Papers*, XXVIII, 214; see also Thomas Hutchinson, *The History of the Colony and Province of Massachusetts-Bay* (Cambridge, Mass., 1936), II, 166.

<sup>21</sup> Manuscript Journal of the Rev. Joseph Baxter, Maine Historical Society, 40.

<sup>22</sup> Eckstorm, "Attack," 546.

<sup>23</sup> In 1719 Bomazeen carried a letter from Joseph Heath and John Minot to Boston. The Executive Council rewarded him and his companions for the service. They gave each coats and shirts of "bleu Cloath." Only Bomazeen received a coat of silver thread. Later, the Councillors learned that Bomazeen was quarreling with the Indian at Norridgewock and they wondered why. The answer is obvious: resplendent in his new finery Bomazeen was ridiculed for being pro-English. May 1, 1719, Heath and Minot to Gov. Shute, Mass. Arch. 51: 317; Baxter, ed., *Baxter Manuscripts*, IX, 447; Mass. Council, May 13, 1719, May 17, 1719 and Sept. 11, 1719.

<sup>24</sup> For the transcript of the conference see the contemporary pamphlet "Georgetown on Arrowwick Island Aug. 9, 1717," printed in "Indian Treaties," Maine Historical Society, *Collections*, 1st ser. (Portland, 1853), III, 361-75.

<sup>25</sup> Quoted in William Williamson, *The History of the State of Maine* (Hallowell, 1832), II, 97.

<sup>26</sup> The Reverend Joseph Baxter referred to the "scurrilous letter sent by Sebastian Ralle ye French Jesuit, to our Governour wherein he declared yt what the English had said concerning ye French King's resigning the lands in new england to ye English had been reported to ye Governour of Canada and he said yt it was false and he would assist ye Indians in Defending of these Lands." Manuscript Journal of the Rev. Joseph Baxter, Me. His. Soc., 6.

<sup>27</sup> Sept. 25, 1715, M. Begon au Ministre, AC, C11A, 35, 209-11; P. Camille de Rochemonteix, *Les Jesuites et la Nouvelle France au XVIII Siecle* (Paris, 1906), I, 452-55; June 30, 1715, Council of Trade and Plantations to Mr. Secretary Stanhope, *Calendar of State Papers*, XXVIII, 214.

<sup>28</sup> Sept. 29, 1718, Governor Shute to the Council of Trade and Plantations, *Ibid.*, XXX, 358.

<sup>29</sup> Nov. 8, 1718, Rapport de M. Begon, AC, C11A, 39, 144-47; *Collection de Manuscripts*, III, 32; Oct. 31, 1718, Rapport de Vaudreuil au Conseil, *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> See Begon's report, Nov. 8, 1718, Memoire pour servir a regler les limites, AC, C11E, 2, 14-29, and Mar. 14, 1719, Council Deliberations on Vaudreuil's letter of Oct. 31, 1718, AC, C11A, 124, 100.

<sup>31</sup> May 23, 1719, Memoire du Roy a Messieurs de Marquis de Vaudreuil et Begon, *Collection de Manuscripts*, III, 40; O'Callaghan, *New York Colonial Documents*, IX, 892.

<sup>32</sup> Feb. 7, 1719/20, Rale to Moody, in J.P. Baxter, *Pioneers of New France in New England* (Albany, 1894), 102.

<sup>33</sup> Jan., 1719/20, In re Conference at Falmouth, Mass. Arch., 29: 57-63; Baxter, ed., *Baxter Manuscripts*, XXIII, 83-87.

<sup>34</sup> Samuel Sewall, *Diary of Samuel Sewall*, Massachusetts Historical Society, *Collections*, 5th ser. (Boston, 1878-82), VIII, 245.

<sup>35</sup> Feb. 7, 1719/20, Rale to Moody, Baxter, *Pioneers*, 96-104; Flynt's Manuscript Commonplace Book, in Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston also quotes this letter.

<sup>36</sup> Mass. Council, Sept. 2, 1720.

<sup>37</sup> W.C. Ford, ed. *Journals of House of Representatives of Massachusetts* (Boston, 1919-1968), II, 273.

<sup>38</sup> Nov., 1720, Conference with the Indians at Georgetown, Mass. Arch., 29: 65-74; Baxter, ed., *Baxter Manuscripts*, XXIII, 97-108; Flynt, *Commonplace Book*, 285-86.

<sup>39</sup> Mass. Council, Jan. 13, 1720/21.

<sup>40</sup> 1718, Memoir respecting the Abnaquis of Acadia, O'Callaghan, *New York Colonial Documents*, IX, 880. (See note 17).

<sup>41</sup> Eckstorm, "Attack," 556.

<sup>42</sup> See June 5, 1721, Letter to the Gov. from Samuel Moody, Mass. Arch., 51: 353; Baxter, ed., *Baxter Manuscripts*, IX, 462-63.

<sup>43</sup> William Williamson, among others, understood that Vaudreuil went to St. Francis and Becancourt on his own initiative to excite the Indians and that he then informed Racle. Williamson's error results from a garbled translation of Vaudreuil's June, 1721, letter to Racle. *History of the State of Maine*, II, 105-06.

<sup>44</sup> June 14, 1721, Begon to Rale, Thwaites, ed., *Jesuit Relations*, LXVII, 59.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>46</sup> Oct. 8, 1721, Messrs. de Vaudreuil and Begon to Louis XV, O'Callaghan, *New York Colonial Documents*, IX, 904; Letter of the Abnakis to Governor Shute, Series F3, Collection Moreau de St. Mery, 2-2, 502-07; Roger B. Ray, ed., Eastern Indians' Letter to the Governour, *Maine Historical Society Quarterly*, XIII (Winter, 1974), 178-84; Baxter, *Pioneers*, 111-18; Ford, ed., *Mass. House Journal*, III, 109-11; *Ibid.*, 89; *The Boston Gazette*, Aug, 28, 1721.

<sup>47</sup> *The New-England Courant*, July 16, 1722; *The Boston Gazette*, July 23, and July 30, 1722; Ford, ed., *Mass. House Journal*, IV, 81. Hutchinson notes that the English "chose to call the proceedings against them a prosecution for rebellion but, if a view be taken of all the transactions between the English and them from the beginning, it will be difficult to say what sort of subjects they were, and it is not certain that they understood they had promised subjection at all." *History of Massachusetts-Bay*, II, 203.

<sup>48</sup> Eckstorm, "Attack," 574.

<sup>49</sup> Aug. 12/23, 1724, Father Ralle to another priest, *Calendar of State Papers*, XXXIV, 429; Baxter, *Pioneers*, 251.

<sup>50</sup> Feb., 1703/04, Major Hilton to Gov. Dudley, Baxter, ed., *Baxter Manuscripts*, IX, 142. Hilton declared: "This is what Offers upon this Expedition and I humbly conceive that the winter time is the onely time ever to march against the Indian Enemy . . . ."

<sup>51</sup> Eckstorm, "Attack," 566.

<sup>52</sup> My italics. August 12/23, 1724, Father Ralle to another priest, *Calendar of State Papers*, XXXIV, 429-31; Baxter, *Pioneers*, 252f.

<sup>53</sup> Harmon did not explain the division of forces to the General Court. The officials and newspapers reported that the victory was due to his leadership. See Hutchinson, *History of Massachusetts-Bay*, II, 235.

<sup>54</sup> Oct. 29, 1724, Letter from Father de la Chasse, Superior-General

of the Missions in New France to Father xxx of the same Society, Thwaites, ed., *Jesuit Relations*, LXVII, 233; Oct. 25, 1725, Lettre de Monsieur le Marquis de Vaudreuil au Ministre, *Collection de Manuscripts*, III, 109. There is nothing unusual, as Eckstorm implies, about the date of these letters. Like all official papers, they were written in October just before the ships left for France and the St. Lawrence became ice-bound. Eckstorm, "Attack," 553.

<sup>55</sup> Papers of the Pejebscot Proprietors, Maine Historical Society.

<sup>56</sup> Aug. 24, 1724, *New-England Courant*; Eckstorm, "Attack," fn. 75, 569.

<sup>57</sup> August 27, 1724, *Boston News-Letter*.

<sup>58</sup> Hutchinson, *History of Massachusetts-Bay*, II, 236.

<sup>59</sup> Oct. 14, 1723, Vaudreuil et Begon au Ministre, AC, C11A, 45, 7.

<sup>60</sup> On the nature of the *Jesuit Relations* see J.H. Kennedy, *Jesuit and Savage in New France* (New Haven, 1950), 78. See also Henri Bechard's refutation of Eckstorm: "A Proposde deux lettres du Pere Sebastien Rasles, S.J.," 191-218. LaChasse was certainly not "making history" as Eckstorm declares. "Attack," 567.

<sup>61</sup> Eckstorm only asserts that Vaudreuil and LaChasse "knew that there were not eleven hundred English and Indians involved in the fight . . . ." "Attack," 551. It is not improbable that the Indians invented the number to salve their own pride. Nor is the impression necessarily infantile on the Indians' part. The precipitate attack and chaotic retreat was obviously confusing.

<sup>62</sup> Oct. 25, 1724, Lettre de Monsieur le Marquis de Vaudreuil au Ministre, *Collection de Manuscripts*, III, 109.

<sup>63</sup> For various versions of this popular acceptance of the French account of Racle's death see: William Allen, *The History of Norridgewock* (Norridgewock, 1849), 40; Rufus King Sewall, *Ancient Dominions of Maine* (Bath, 1859), 249; Henrietta Danforth Wood, *Early Days of Norridgewock* (Skowhegan, 1941), 3; Henrietta Tozier Totman, "Sebastien Rale," in *Maine, My State* (Lewiston, 1919), 150; A.J. Coolidge and J.B. Mansfield, *History and Description of New England. Maine* (Boston, 1860), 233; John S.C. Abbott, *The History of Maine* (Boston, 1875), 314; John Francis Sprague, *Sebastien Rale: A Maine Tragedy of the Eighteenth Century* (Boston, 1906), 41.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, P.F.X. de Charlevoix, *History and General Description of New France*, trans., J.G. Shea (New York, 1900), V, 279; Letter from Father de la Chasse, Thwaites, *Jesuit Relations*, LXVII, 235.

<sup>65</sup> Eckstorm, "Attack," 571.